Charles Hill

*The artist and his family*

Late 1860’s

Oil on canvas 48cm high x 66cm wide

In a thick, ornate gilt frame with vines swirling around the edges, a family and their seven children sit down to a meal together, at a table in a summerhouse with large garden tools at the frames edges. The view beyond the immediate scene looks out across countryside. Their clothes are a time capsule of the mid-1800’s, long dresses and the boys in suits with vests and ties. The colour pallete is earthy, browns and greens with pops of colour from the food on the table.

Around the table is a certain level of chaos, in the middle, framed by the lattice entrance to the summerhouse, stands a woman at the brink of serving a plate of apples to the table. She holds them at chest level, her elbows bent. Before her, a mother sits on one side of the square table with its clean white tablecloth. She’s bent forward, in a navy dress and the infant in her arms reaches one chubby arm up as though to touch her mother’s face.

The table is set with cutlery and plates, furtherest from us, a large white loaf resembling an oversized dinner roll, torn from a baked group of others with it’s fluffy, uncrusted sides exposed. Next to it, a red decanter with a delicate neck and on either side of the table, near the plates two slabs of pink-ish meat.

At our left, seated on a bench adjacent to the table is a man in a taupe robe. He turns to face a toddler in her soft pink dress with a white apron over the top. She leans on him, her arm curls about his shoulder.

At his feet at two more children, a boy and a girl, the latter in white and the girl in a navy dress like her mother – the children are at play on the floor.

The floor is dirt and straw, there is a small dog beneath the table.

On our right, at the other side of the table, three children, ranging in age for approximately 10 – 14 are seated straight-backed, expectant; two boys and a girl.